

May 16, 2019

TO: The Honorable East Greenwich Town Council,  
Dr. Mark Schwager, President

FROM: East Greenwich Planning Board,  
Jason Gomez, Chair

RE: Zoning Amendment pertaining to Distilleries

At its regular May 15, 2019 meeting, the Planning Board voted to favorably recommend to you the Proposed Zoning Ordinance – as drafted - which will newly provide for alcohol distilleries in Town. Our vote including a finding that there is no provision in the proposed Ordinance that would be in conflict with the Town's Comprehensive Community Plan. As you know, distilleries as a land use are currently not provided for within the Zoning Code but a business owner has approached the Town with an interest in a specific location for his operation. Most of our membership opined that distilleries should be treated in a manner comparable to beer breweries as currently accommodated by the Code and since the state licenses them as a manufacturer, our "manufacturing" zone (known locally as the "Light Industry and Office Zone") seems like the appropriate place to allow this use by right. You will see very small distilleries would be allowed in certain commercial zones by Special Use Permit from the Zoning Board of Review and larger operations would not be allowed at all. There was one Board member who dissented in our vote and felt strongly that such operations should not be allowed anywhere by right and a Special Use Permit should be required in all locations so that the municipality retains maximum control. This method of approval would provide the public with ample opportunity to be heard and have their unique concerns addressed and would give the Town an avenue for imposing conditions and performance standards to mitigate any perceived negative impacts.

We are sure the proposed Ordinance will be vetted thoroughly by the Council. Our Board actually discussed the proposed Ordinance on three separate occasions as we take our role as advisors to the Town Council on such matters, consistent with Section 260-82 (D) of the Zoning Code, very seriously. During the course of our review, the Draft was revised according to the will of the majority of our membership. Your public hearing has been scheduled and advertised for Monday, May 20, 2019 and we wish you well in your deliberations. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me or the Planning Staff. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.